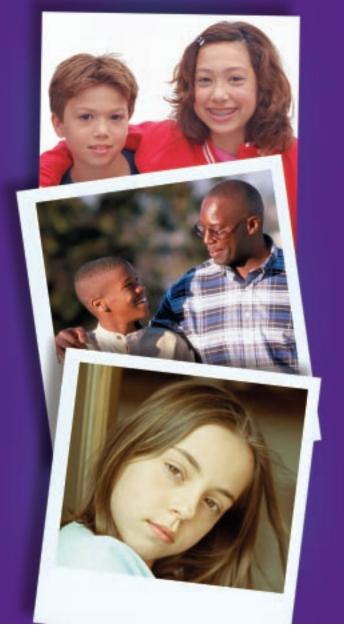
Be the first to TALK WITH YOUR PRE-TEEN about ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, and other DRUGS

A FAMILY GUIDE



PRE-TEENS and DRUG USE

"I thought, 'My child is too young.' I didn't know how many children in middle school are already trying drugs."

MANY ADULTS ARE SURPRISED TO LEARN THAT IN MASSACHUSETTS:

- More than 25% of 8th graders have used alcohol.
- Nearly 8% have used marijuana.
- 20% of students have smoked their first cigarette before age 13.

DURING THE MIDDLE-SCHOOL YEARS, CHILDREN:

- Change in many ways that may be confusing for them and for their families
- Become more independent and begin to care more about what their friends think (peer pressure)
- May try alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs for the first time

The middle-school years are an important time when parents and other caring adults can help children make healthy choices. Talking, guiding, and staying involved are powerful things you can do for your child.



WHAT CAN I DO TO PREVENT SUBSTANCE ABUSE?

Research has shown that parents and other caring adults play an important role in preventing substance abuse.

- Teens who learn anti-drug messages at home are 42% less likely to use drugs.
- 33% of young people say that losing their parents' respect and pride is one of the main reasons they don't use drugs.

It's important to remember that your children are listening to you even though they may not show it. Research shows, and young people confirm, that:

- Children want you to set rules even though they may act angry or say their friends' parents are not as strict.
- What you think is still important, though they may seem to care more about the opinions of friends.
- Your children need you now more then ever.

WHAT CAN I DO?

- Accept that every child—including your own—is at risk for substance abuse.
- Be involved. Spend time with your child.
 Eat meals together whenever possible.
 Spend time alone together on a regular basis.
- Learn how you can help your child grow up healthy and safe. This booklet contains tips and suggestions that you can try or adapt.
- Connect with your community (see page 22).
- Make healthy decisions for yourself, especially about tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs. Preteens still learn the most from their parents.

TALKING ABOUT ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, and OTHER DRUGS

"Whenever I try to talk to her about anything important, she just rolls her eyes and says, 'Blah blah blah.'"

Middle schoolers are facing new challenges. Parents need to find new ways to talk with them about important issues like alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. Here are some suggestions that can make it easier:

- Begin bringing up the topic at an early age, when children are most willing to listen.
- If you haven't started talking early, remember that it's never too late to start. Don't be afraid! Your child might feel relieved.
- Be clear that because you love your child, you do not want him or her to use any drugs, including alcohol or tobacco. Don't assume your child knows what you expect.
- Be sure your children know what to do if they find themselves around alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs. Help them practice what they will say. Together, make a plan for what they will do, like calling for a ride home.
- Share information about health risks and legal consequences of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use (see the "Facts" section of this booklet). Young people are interested in, and respond to, this kind of information.
- Talk with your child about his or her values and goals, and how they might be affected by drug use.
- Remember that this is not just one conversation. Your child needs you to keep talking and listening.

WHEN ARE THE BEST TIMES TO TALK?

"I'd like to talk to my child about drugs, but it's really hard to get started!"

In a recent study, 74% of fourth graders said they wished their parents would talk to them about drugs. Keep that in mind if your child tries to avoid the subject when you bring it up.

WHEN AND WHERE TO START TALKING

- Choose a time when you and your child are both relaxed and in a good mood—perhaps when you're driving in the car, going for a walk together, or after dinner.
- Spend time alone with your child on a regular basis. Use this time to have fun together, strengthen your bond, and provide the chance to talk about important issues.
- Discuss television shows, movies, news articles, or school assignments about alcohol, tobacco, or other drug use.

HOW DO I START?

Finding the first words is sometimes the hardest part. Here are some ways of beginning a conversation—but feel free to use your own words.

- "I realize we haven't talked about alcohol and other drugs for a while. I love you and want to be sure you're OK."
- "I know that most kids your age don't drink, but I just wanted to check in with you about how important it is that you never drive in a car with someone who's been using drugs or drinking. Call me anytime if you need a ride."
- "The person in this movie is addicted to drugs. Why do you think she started using them? What do you think will happen to her? How can she turn her life around?"

HOW CAN I KEEP US TALKING?

Listening can be as powerful as talking. Good listening helps you learn more about your child and builds the bond between you.

- Listen with respect. Take your child's opinions seriously and you will build his or her sense of responsibility and pride.
- Show you're listening. Nod or say things like "That's interesting" or "I didn't know that." Provide feedback. Repeat what you heard.
- Be open. Ask questions that help you learn more.
- Say how you feel but use a caring tone. "I am upset that there was alcohol at the party and you didn't call me."
- Don't criticize your child (don't say "You're a bad person"), but do point out behavior that must change ("You may not use any alcohol").
- Know when to let the conversation end—if your child stops listening, if you hear yourself repeating what you already said, or if either of you gets too stressed.
- Come back to the topic—often. "I've been thinking about some of the things you said last week when we talked about smoking."

There are lots of other important ways of keeping in touch, too—a few examples are:

- Ask about current songs or music groups, fashion, TV, movies, fads. Be curious, and respect how much your child knows.
- Ask your child to show or teach you something new—like a favorite website or a game.
- Help them practice saying "no" to alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.
- Ask children to show you information they get at school about drugs, and review it together.

BIG QUESTIONS

"DID YOU EVER USE DRUGS?"

Many parents put off talking with their children because they don't know what to say if asked about their own alcohol or drug use. Many parents can answer "No," but others need to plan how they will answer this question. Although you might feel uncomfortable, this is a great chance to talk with your child and help him or her learn.

Experts say you should answer honestly. If you do not tell the truth, you risk losing your child's trust later. How much you want to say may depend on your child's age. You do not need to give details.

The best approach is to be prepared. Here are some things you might say:

- "We're talking about you and your life. I want to help make sure you are safe."
- "We didn't know then how much drugs can hurt us. Regardless of what I've done, as your parent I need to set limits for you."
- "I wish I'd known that the people who wanted me to try drugs weren't real friends."
- "Some of the things that happened to me because of drugs were really scary, and I knew people who died because of them. I want you to benefit from what I learned without having to take the risk."

"BUT YOU DRINK (OR SMOKE)..."

- If you drink, do so responsibly. Always provide non-alcoholic drink choices if serving alcohol to other adults. Never ask a child to bring you an alcoholic drink.
- If you smoke, explain that when you began people didn't know how unhealthy it is and that it's very hard to stop.
- If you abuse alcohol or other drugs, seek professional help (see "Resources"). 6

FAMILY RULES

Young people are less likely to use tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs if their parents make clear rules about it. Here are some ways to make family rules work:

- When possible, create rules together. Youth who are part of making rules are more likely to follow them.
- Give every rule a consequence (what happens if the rule is broken). When possible, involve your child in this, too.
- Choose consequences that are important to your child right now ("no calls or e-mail tonight" or "no television for a week"). They should not be severe or far in the future. Be sure you will always be able to enforce them.
- Discuss family rules to make sure they are clear to everyone.
- Write down the rules and consequences, and put them where everyone will see them often.
- Some families find it helpful to write a contract that a child can sign, agreeing to not use alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.
- Consider holding family meetings on a regular basis so everyone has input into family issues.
- If your child feels a rule is unfair, listen and be open. Some rules need to change as children get older.
- Decide on positive rewards for honoring family rules.





KNOW WHAT YOUR CHILD IS DOING

"He gets angry when I ask questions. But I remind him, 'I'm your parent. I love you. It's my job to know who you're with and what you're doing.'"

Knowing what your child is doing reduces the chance of him or her becoming involved with drugs. This doesn't mean you don't trust children, it means you want to be sure they're safe.

Here are some tips:

- Set a regular time when your child must return home. Be flexible on special occasions.
- Always know where your child is, with whom, and what they will be doing.
- Call or ask your child to call you at specific times.
- Talk in advance with the parents of friends who are having parties or sleepovers. Call or stop in to make sure an adult is around.
- Agree on what your child will do if a situation involves alcohol or other drugs (such as call you or another trusted person who can bring him/her home).
- Keep a list of phone numbers of your child's friends.

Knowing your child's friends and parents is a great way to help children stay safe.





WHAT SHOULD I LOOK FOR?

"I missed the early signs. I didn't know what to look for. I never thought he might be trying drugs."

If you are concerned that your child might have a problem with alcohol or other drugs, it's important to remember:

- Don't blame yourself. Drug use today can affect any family.
- Don't put off dealing with the problem. Young people can move quickly from "trying" to "needing" drugs. The most important and loving thing you can do for your child is to get help right away.
- See "Resources" for where to call and how to learn more.

Parents should watch for changes in their children that might be signs of drug use. Here are some things to watch for—but keep in mind that some of these signs may be caused by other problems too, and that a few may be a normal part of adolescent development.

- Change in mood or personality
- Sleeping or eating more or less than usual
- Less interest in school, friends, activities
- Decrease in quality of schoolwork; skipping school
- New friends you haven't met
- Money or objects missing from home
- Reports of parties with drugs or alcohol
- Breaking rules, acting angry

YOU CAN FIND INFORMATION ABOUT SPECIFIC DRUGS ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES:

Alcohol, page 11 Club drugs, page 12 Cocaine/Crack, page 13 Heroin, page 14 Inhalants, page 15

Marijuana, page 16
Over-the-counter/
Prescription drugs, page 17
Tobacco, page 18
9

UNDERSTANDING LAWS ABOUT DRUG USE

Young people think about "now" more than about "the future." Knowing the legal consequences may help them avoid tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs. Here are some laws your child should know about (there may be more in your community):

- Giving or selling tobacco to someone under 18 is breaking the law.
- Using alcohol under the age of 21 is breaking the law.
- Using marijuana or any other illicit drug is against the law at any age.
- Bad decisions about alcohol and other drugs can limit future choices—like being able to get a driver's license, being part of school activities, getting into college, or getting financial aid.
- A criminal record can prevent someone from getting certain types of jobs.
- In Massachusetts, children under age 17 who commit a crime may be sentenced to the Department of Youth Services (DYS).

Be sure your child knows that the following actions are illegal:

- Using someone's ID to buy, or try to buy, alcohol.
- Getting alcohol by asking someone over 21 to buy it.
- Driving in a car where there is unopened alcohol (even if it's in the trunk) if there is no one over 21 in the car.
- Letting other people drink in the car while you're driving.
- Giving (as well as selling) drugs to someone.
- Getting a drug from someone but not using it.
- Giving a prescription pill to a friend. 10

ALCOHOL

WHAT IS IT?

- Intoxicating agent in fermented and distilled liquors
- Also called booze, fire water, juice, beer, wine, cooler

STATISTICS

- In Massachusetts, 28% of young people have had a drink before age 13.
- Almost half of 4th-6th graders say their friends want them to try alcohol.
- Most children first try alcohol between ages 10-14.
- Half of 6th graders who drink get their alcohol at home.
- 25% of 8th graders admit to being drunk at least once.

RISKS

- Decreased inhibition, poor decision making, increased risk-taking
- Increase in violent behavior, injury, car crashes, sexual activity, other drug use
- Death (from drinking a large amount quickly—called "alcohol poisoning")
- Anxiety, depression, suicide
- Liver damage, stroke, and cancer
- Addiction (alcoholism). People who begin drinking before age 15 are 4 times more likely to become dependent on alcohol than those who wait until age 21.

- Unlocked or unmonitored alcohol at home
- Alcohol missing from bottles
- Smell of alcohol, slurred speech, trouble walking
- Unable to revive or awaken—call 911/emergency immediately.

CLUB DRUGS

WHAT ARE THEY?

- Wide variety of mind-altering drugs sometimes used at all-night dance parties (raves); includes Ecstasy (MDMA), Rohypnol, and GHB (gamma-hydroxybutyrate).
- Looks like white powder, tablets, capsules, clear liquid, or suppository
- Can be taken orally, injected, inhaled, used in suppositories, snorted, added to marijuana or tobacco, or mixed in drinks
- Also called ex, roofies, date rape drug, adam, essence, hug, beans, or love drug

STATISTICS

- The number of teens trying Ecstasy has increased 71% since 1999.
- 4% of 8th graders report having used Ecstasy at least once.

RISKS

- Risks increase when used with alcohol
- May be put in an unsuspecting person's drink in order to commit sexual assault
- May be laced with other harmful substances
- Death, coma, brain damage, stroke, seizures
- Vomiting, shaking, confusion, blurred vision, depression, anxiety, paranoia, sometimes weeks after drug is taken
- Poor memory and learning
- Increased heart rate and blood pressure; sharp increase in body temperature
- Addiction

- Confusion, depression, sleep problems, anxiety, loss of appetite, excessive thirst
- Tense muscles, clenched teeth, rapid eye movement, faintness, chills, sweating
- Pacifiers (for teeth clenching)

COCAINE/CRACK

WHAT IS IT?

- Cocaine: substance obtained from coca leaves
- Crack: cocaine that is processed for smoking. Crack is cheaper, easier to use, and more addictive than cocaine.
- Looks like white powder, crystals, or rock salt
- Can be snorted, dissolved in water and injected, smoked
- Also called rock, freebase, flake, snow, blow

STATISTICS

- In Massachusetts, cocaine and crack are the second most frequently used illicit drugs in middle schools.
- Nearly 4% of 8th graders have used cocaine at least once.
- Cocaine use among 8th graders has doubled in recent years.

RISK

- Death, even on first use
- Heart attack, stroke, respiratory problems
- Convulsions
- Damaged nasal cavity (from snorting)
- HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, other infections from shared needles
- Addiction

- Paranoia or aggressive behavior
- Depression
- Runny nose, frequent sniffing
- Dilated pupils
- Restlessness, anxiety, insomnia
- Repetitive behavior
- Pipe, glass tube, short straw, copper scouring pad

HEROIN

WHAT IS IT?

- Drug produced from morphine, a substance extracted from poppy plants
- Looks like white to dark-brown powder or substance like tar
- Can be smoked, snorted, or injected
- Also called smack, horse, mud, junk, black tar, Big H, skag

STATISTICS

- Heroin causes more drug-related deaths than any other illicit drug.
- 16% of 8th graders say heroin is easy to obtain.

RISKS

- Death, even at first use
- May contain substances that clog blood vessels
- HIV/AIDS or hepatitis transmitted by shared needles
- Pneumonia, other infections, liver disease
- Nausea, constipation
- Addiction (smoking or snorting heroin are as dangerous and addictive as injecting it)

- Needles, spoons (may be charred), bottle caps
- Unusual happiness ("rush")
- Flushed skin, dry mouth
- Drowsiness, nodding off
- Staggering, confusion, slow or slurred speech
- Nausea
- Constricted pupils, watery eyes
- Itching
- Needle marks on the skin, infections
- Slow, shallow breathing; clammy skin; convulsions; coma (signs of overdose—call 911/emergency immediately)

INHALANTS

WHAT ARE THEY?

- Common household products that produce gases or vapors causing intoxicating effects
- Can be sniffed or "huffed" (inhaled through the mouth); such use is illegal.
- Also called poppers, bolt, rush, whippets, snappers, locker room, snort, laughing gas

STATISTICS

- For many, one of the first substances abused—some Massachusetts youth begin using inhalants in grade school.
- More than 15% of 8th graders have used an inhalant.

RISK

- Death from heart failure, accidents, or suffocation (even at first use)
- Hearing loss, loss of sense of smell
- Brain damage
- Damage to bone marrow, liver, and kidneys
- Numbness, spasms, loss of consciousness
- Addiction

- Sneezing, coughing, nosebleeds
- Mood swings, tiredness, confusion
- Bad breath, chemical odor on clothing
- Lack of coordination, slurred speech
- Sores on face, in mouth and nose; rash around mouth and nose
- Paint or stains on face, fingers, clothing
- Rags, empty containers of products
- Access at home to products that can be abused. (Check products regularly. Purchase water-based versions of products if available.)
- Unable to revive or awaken—call 911.

MARIJUANA

WHAT IS IT?

- Dried leaves and flowers of the hemp plant
- Looks like green, brown, or gray mixture of dried, shredded leaves and stems
- Can be smoked in cigarettes, cigars, or pipes
- Also called pot, weed, reefer, joint, blunt, dope, grass, herb

STATISTICS

- The most commonly used illicit (illegal) drug among young people.
- 12% of Massachusetts young people have used marijuana for the first time before age 13.
- Nearly 8% of Massachusetts middle school students currently use marijuana.
- More teens enter treatment for marijuana abuse than for all other illicit drugs combined.

RISKS

- Marijuana grown today is chemically stronger than in the past.
- Interferes with memory, learning, concentration, problem-solving, school performance
- Increased heart rate, panic attacks
- Cough, lung damage, cancer
- Slowed reactions, distorted perception, injury
- May contain other dangerous substances
- Addiction

- Cigarettes, cigars, small pipe, lighters, matches, rolling papers, bobby pins
- Water pipe or bong (a tube, soda can, or other container partially filled with liquid, with smaller tubes extending)
- Smoky smell in air, on clothing or hair
- Loss of motivation, confusion, red eyes, increased appetite

OVER-THE-COUNTER DRUGS and PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

WHAT ARE THEY?

- Variety of drugs available in homes, stores, or pharmacies that can be used for non-healthrelated reasons
- Look like tablets or capsules
- Can be swallowed or crushed and then snorted or injected
- Some are called Kpins (Clonipin), oxy or OC (OxyContin), vikes (Vicodin), skittles or kibbles (Ritalin)

STATISTICS

- 8% of 12-17 year olds report using prescription drugs for non-medical reasons.
- 34% of youth with ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) report being asked to sell or trade their medicines.

RISKS

- Overdose, death
- Increased risk when mixed with alcohol or other drugs
- Loss of appetite
- Fevers, convulsions, headaches
- Irregular heartbeat and breathing
- Addiction

- Unlocked medicine cabinet, missing medications
- Child who is allowed to give him- or herself prescription drugs (school nurses or parents should administer medications)
- Repeated movements or meaningless tasks, twitching

TOBACCO

WHAT IS IT?

- Cut up leaves of cultivated tobacco plant
- Can be smoked in cigarettes, cigars, bidis (flavored cigarette), or pipes or chewed (smokeless tobacco)
- Also called butts, spit, chew, dip

STATISTICS

- 20% of Massachusetts students smoke their first whole cigarette before age 13. Children who first smoke before age 13 are much more likely to smoke in high school and are twice as likely to have tried quitting at least once.
- Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death in the US—one of every five deaths in the US is caused by tobacco use.

RISKS

- Addiction—the earlier young people begin to smoke, the more likely they are to become addicted to tobacco. Within days of starting to smoke, young smokers show signs of addiction.
- Lung disease, heart disease, stroke, asthma
- Cancer (cigarettes contain more than 43 cancer-causing chemicals)
- Reduced physical activity performance

- Cigarettes, matches, lighters
- Smell of smoke on clothing, hair
- Tobacco rolled in leaves, available in flavors ("bidis")

WHAT CAN I DO IF I THINK MY CHILD NEEDS HELP?

If you have noticed changes in your child and are worried about possible drug use, here are some things you can do:

- Choose a time when you are calm and your child is not under the influence of any drug.
- Tell your child what you have noticed and that you are concerned because you care.
- Find out what your child has been feeling or dealing with that may lead him or her to use drugs.
- Reassure your child that you still love him or her.
- If your child admits to using drugs, work together to solve the problem.
- Discuss how to avoid drug use in the future.
- Be firm and enforce the consequences that are part of your family rules.
- Talk about how your child can rebuild your trust.

If your child continues to use drugs or if you think his or her safety is at risk:

- Remember that getting help early is the key to protecting your child's health and safety.
- Contact the Massachusetts Substance Abuse Helpline (800-327-5050) for information and referral to treatment resources.
- Call 911 for an emergency.
- Talk to a professional such as your child's health care provider.
- Remember that addiction is a disease that can be treated and that people can recover from it.



HOW CAN I LEARN MORE? WHERE CAN MY FAMILY GO FOR HELP?

MASSACHUSETTS RESOURCES

Massachusetts Substance Abuse Information and Referral Helpline 800-327-5050 (toll free; multi-lingual) TTY: 617-536-5872 • www.helpline-online.com Information, treatment referrals, 24 hours a day

Massachusetts and Rhode Island Poison Control Center

800-222-1222 (toll free) • TTY: 888-244-5313 www.maripoisoncenter.com Information, 24-hour hotline

Al-Anon

888-4AL-ANON (toll free) • www.al-anon.org Groups to help friends and families of alcoholics. Alateen is for young Al-Anon members. No fees, anonymous.

Center for Adolescent Substance Abuse Research, Children's Hospital, Boston 617-355-5433 • www.ceasar-boston.org Information, diagnosis, assessment, referral

Massachusetts Regional Centers for Healthy Communities

For the location nearest you, call 800-327-5050 www.state.ma.us/dph/ohc/reghealthcenters.htm Resources, community programs

Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Bureau of Substance Abuse Services www.state.ma.us/dph/bsas/BSAS.htm Information, statistics, publications

Massachusetts Inhalant Abuse Task Force 617-624-5111 • TTY: 617-536-5186 www.state.ma.us/dph/inhalant Information, publications

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE? WHERE CAN MY FAMILY GO FOR HELP?

NATIONAL RESOURCES

Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids 202-296-5469 • www.tobaccofreekids.org Information, advocacy

Family Matters

University of North Carolina School of Public Health • www.sph.unc.edu/familymatters Publications, step-by-step on-line guide

Join Together

www.jointogether.org Information, publications, advocacy

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information

800-729-6686 (toll free; English and Spanish) www.health.org Information, publications, referrals

National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence • 800-NCA-CALL (toll free) www.ncadd.org • Information, referrals

National Institute on Drug Abuse www.nida.nih.gov • Information

Parents. The Anti-Drug. (multi-lingual) www.theantidrug.com • Information, advice

PTA Commonsense

pta.org/commonsense • Information, advice

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

800-662-HELP (toll free)

800-662-9832 (toll free; Spanish)

TDD: 800-487-4889

www.samhsa.gov • Information, referrals, helpline

WHAT CAN I DO IN MY COMMUNITY?

There are many ways you can help prevent alcohol or drug use among children in your neighborhood, larger community, and beyond.

- Share this brochure with friends, neighbors, and others.
- Talk with other adults about the dangers of alcohol and other drugs, and your "no-use" rules. Encourage them to talk with their children.
- Learn more about underage drinking and drug use in your community. Contact your parent-teacher organization (PTO), neighborhood association, or police department.
- Help strengthen school policies and programs, and local enforcement of laws prohibiting the selling of alcohol and tobacco to minors. Connect with school administrators, PTOs, and police departments.
- Involve young people in activities and prevention efforts.
- Find out if there are fun activities and safe places for children. Organize neighborhood games, parties, and other fun, alcohol- and drug-free activities.
- Educate others. Organize an essay, poster, slogan, or rap contest.
- Write letters to the editor of local papers and producers of local radio stations. Contact local and state elected officials.
- Form a block association or neighborhood watch. Report possible drug dealing in your neighborhood (you can do this without saying who you are).



Be the first to

TALK WITH YOUR PRE-TEEN about ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, and other DRUGS

A FAMILY GUIDE



STATISTICS IN THIS BROCHURE WERE TAKEN FROM THE FOLLOWING SOURCES:

- Massachusetts Youth Health Survey, October 2002 (www.state.ma.us/dph/bsas/data/stats.htm)
- Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey (www.doe.mass.edu/hsss/yrbs/01/results.pdf)
- Office of National Drug Control Policy (www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov)
- National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (www.casacolumbia.org)
- Monitoring the Future, Overview of Key Findings 2002 (www.monitoringthefuture.org)
- Parents. The Anti Drug (www.theantidrug.com)
- Partnership for a Drug-Free America (www.drugfreeamerica.org)
- U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services (www.health.org)

FUNDED BY

Massachusetts Dept. of Public Health,
Bureau of Substance Abuse Services

PRODUCED BY

MASSACHUSETTS HEALTH PROMOTION CLEARINGHOUSE,
THE MEDICAL FOUNDATION